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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: SENIOR DEFENSE MINISTRY OFFICIAL BLASTS IDF
ACTIONS IN WEST BANK

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: Haggai Alon, Senior Political Advisor to Defense Minister (DM) Peretz, criticized the IDF in a Ha'aretz interview for serving as the "settlers' army," defying High Court of Justice (HCJ) rulings on the separation barrier and stonewalling AMA (Agreement on Movement and Access) implementation. Alon has been increasingly at odds with the IDF for dragging its feet on removing West Bank obstacles and checkpoints, and IDF officials have refused to attend meetings with him for the past month. With Minister Peretz's tenure at the Defense Ministry likely coming to an end soon, Alon's outburst reflected his frustration with IDF actions on the ground and likely indicated that he felt he had nothing left to lose by publicly stating what other officials have intimated to Emboffs over the last year on AMA and settlement issues -- that insubordinate elements within the IDF have been blocking progress. Embassy contacts have also voiced similar sentiments regarding the situation in Hebron and the lack of GOI movement on the barrier's rerouting, as ordered by the High Court of Justice (HCJ). The interview was followed a day later by a Ha'aretz editorial stating that a "military coup" is taking place in the West Bank, as the IDF ignores the decisions of the elected Israeli government. End summary.

IDF Collusion With Settlers...

12. (U) Political Advisor to Defense Minister Peretz, Haggai Alon, asserted in an interview published in the May 20 Ha'aretz, that the IDF had disregarded the GOI's diplomatic agenda in the West Bank and is serving as the "settlers' army," suffocating the Palestinian population. He specifically cited Hebron, describing the military's policy as causing the Arab population to leave the city's center. He also said that the IDF has disregarded HCJ rulings, which ordered the military to balance Israel's security needs vis-a-vis Palestinian quality-of-life issues. Alon described military rule as being arbitrary, able to restrict Palestinian movement, while also refraining from enforcing the law on settlers. The interview was followed a day later by a Ha'aretz editorial stating that a "military coup" is taking place in the West Bank. It noted that while ministers speak about a two-state solution, IDF actions are suffocating the Palestinian population while enabling settlements to flourish. The editorial referenced the Alon interview as evidence of the military enforcing its own agenda in the West Bank and being only theoretically subordinate to the elected Israeli government.

Restrictions on Arab Movement in Hebron

13. (C) Alon's comments regarding Hebron mirror what post has been hearing from NGO contacts, which have pointed to the closure of Shuhada Street in Hebron for the last six years -- despite any formal government orders calling for the closure -- as evidence of the IDF's deference to settler demands. Econoff also obtained a document dated November 1, 2000, given to the local IDF commander by Hebron settlers in which they recommend the limitation of the movement of Arabs within Hebron. According to Hagit Ofra of Peace Now and Embassy EU contacts, those recommendations, delineated below (translated from Hebrew), have been largely implemented by the IDF.

Begin text:

-- No vehicle will be allowed to travel between H1 and H2 or traverse Policeman's Square, underneath the Romano House, and the Mani route. Vehicles may also not enter from Abu-Sneneh near the pharmacy.

-- Arab vehicles will not be allowed on Tarpat, David Hamelech, Hebron Valley (Tnuva), and Esther streets, on Route 160 from Kiryat Arba to the Cave of the Patriarchs, or on the Prophets Route.

-- Pedestrian Movement will not be allowed for Arabs on the road behind the guard post (except for local residents), on David HaMelech Street between the gas station and the Kastel House (except for local residents), on Small HaShalala, Erez, and Tnuva streets, and in the Kasbah -- Einav Street adjacent to Jewish residents homes (except for local residents).

-- The flea market will not be allowed to operate on Fridays.

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-- The petrol station will not be opened.

-- Non-stationary stalls will not be allowed on David HaMelech, Hebron Valley, and Esther streets.

-- The wholesale market will be closed and moved to H1, or... (sic)

-- The times during which the movement of Arabs is allowed will be limited to half of daylight times (6 out of 12), preferably between 0700-1300. There will also be a night curfew in Hebron during all hours of darkness (from 1700 until 0500).

-- The stall covers that have been removed in the market will not be reinstalled. Also, the stall covers at the Kasba and the Small HaShalala will be removed to enable an unlimited field of vision.

-- The shops underneath Hadasa House, House No. 6 (Abraham neighborhood), and Daniela Garden (Abraham neighborhood) will be sealed.

-- The Waqf offices adjacent to the Abraham neighborhood will be closed (near Nahum Gate)

-- At the Patriarchs Cave, there will be total separation according to the Shamgar Committee decisions. The Arab Waqf will not be allowed to access the Jewish part of the Cave.

-- If Jews are attacked when the curfew is not in effect, it will be resumed immediately.

-- A shooting incident will result in a week-long curfew.

End text.

14. (U) Press reports indicate that Deputy Defense Minister Sneh has launched an internal probe of the security

establishment, particularly within the Shin Bet and the West Bank police, to discover how the settlers succeeded in allegedly surprising authorities by moving into a building in Hebron on March 19, creating a new outpost. Both the Shin Bet and the West Bank police have units responsible for gathering intelligence on Israelis resident in the West Bank and for thwarting attacks on Palestinians. The May-June 2007 report by the Foundation for Middle East Peace further notes IDF complicity with the Hebron settlers. It notes that a March 3 YNET report shows Hebron settler girls pelting eggs at Palestinians in the presence of an IDF soldier and Border Police officers, who make no move to stop them.

IDF Defies HCJ Rulings

15. (U) The IDF has disregarded several HCJ rulings, delaying rerouting the security barrier around Alfe Menashe and Zofin, and refusing to remove the 86-centimeter high parapet that had been built along 41-kilometers of road 317. In June 2006, the HCJ had overturned its previous decision to accept the route of the barrier in the Zofin area. At the time, the Court decided that Danny Tirza -- the IDF's original architect of the barrier's route -- had not been truthful in explaining his routing decision and that he had, in fact, taken into account an approved plan to expand the Zofin settlement when deciding the barrier's route. Regarding route 317, the HCJ ruled in December 2006 that the GOI was obligated to dismantle, within six months, the short barrier that the IDF had installed along 41-kilometers of this road. According to Alon, the IDF ignored the HCJ's order for months and openly defied the order to remove this parapet by announcing that it has no intention of dismantling the barrier.

Internal MOD Battle on AMA/Benchmarks

16. (C) Alon has been increasingly at odds with the IDF for dragging its feet on removing West Bank obstacles and checkpoints, and IDF officials have refused to attend meetings with him for the past month. Unlike his predecessor, Brig. Gen. (res.) Baruch Spiegel, who worked with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the IDF to create an accurate database of checkpoints and obstacles in the West Bank, Alon

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stated that the MOD data is not accessible to him and he has no way of knowing the exact number of checkpoints.

17. (C) Leading up to the interview, Ha'aretz had recently published an article stating that MOD personnel were accusing a senior MOD official -- possibly Alon -- of leaking classified information to the U.S. in preparation of the benchmarks document. Alon's interview to Ha'aretz was likely offered to strike back at this allegation, as well as to signal his frustration regarding the IDF's position on the AMA and benchmarks. General Spiegel told A/DCM that "Haggai is Haggai" -- his personality and style is direct -- and that Alon was, in part, responding to the recent investigation regarding information leaks. With Minister Peretz's tenure at the Defense Ministry likely coming to an end soon, Alon's venting of frustration likely indicates that he felt he had nothing to lose by describing what other officials have intimated over the last year on AMA and settlement issues -- that elements within the IDF have been blocking progress. His statements also play to Peretz's core Labor Party supporters, many of whom are Arab, prior to the upcoming Labor Party leadership race.

18. (C) In the aftermath of Alon's interview, Spiegel told A/DCM that Alon's interview made a "big noise" in the MOD. Spiegel has been talking to high-level officers in the

Defense Ministry urging better decision-making mechanisms.
He said that the IDF had often made decisions without
considering other viewpoints, and was now paying a price for
it. Spiegel likened these problems and the changes needed to
address them to the problems identified and solutions
suggested in the Winograd Report.

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JONES